

pression, ⁵ he renewed his births/ And in testimony of the due performance of the rites the king girt his loins with the tail, a compendious representative of the skin of the sacrificed beast, whence the name of ' the festival of the tail/

" How are we to explain the rule that at a certain point of his reign every Pharaoh must undergo this ritual death followed by fictitious rebirth ? Is it simply a renewal of the initiation into the Osirian mysteries ? or does the festival present some more special features ? The ill-defined part played by the royal children in these rites seems to me to indicate that the Sed festival represents other episodes which refer to the transmission of the regal office. At the dawn of civilization in Egypt the people were perhaps familiar with the alternative either of putting their king to death in full vigour in order that his power should be transmitted intact to his successor, or of attempting to rejuvenate him and to 'renew his life/ The latter measure was an invention of the Pharaohs. How could it be carried out more effectively than by identifying themselves with Osiris, by applying to themselves the process of resurrection, the funeral rites by which Isis, according to the priests, had magically saved her husband from death ? Perhaps the fictitious death of the king may be regarded as a mitigation of the primitive murder of the divine king, a transition from a barbarous reality to symbolism."¹

¹ A. Moret, *Mysteres égyptiens* brother or sister of the new-born child. (Paris, 1913) 5 PP- 187-190. For a See C. G. Seligmann and Margaret A. detailed account of the Egyptian evidence, monumental and inscriptional, upon an early Egyptian standard," *Man*, xi. (1911)

on which M. Moret bases his view of object which these the king's rebirth by deputy from the represent a human hide of a sacrificed animal, see pp. 16 interpreted by M. Alexandre *sqq.*, 72 *sqq.* of the same work. Com- likeness of a human pare his article, "Du sacrifice en embryo. As to the belief that the afterbirth is a twin Egypte," *Revue de PHistoire des Reli- brother or sister of the infant, see gions*, lvii. (1908) pp. 93 *sqq.* In sup- and below, pp. above, vol. i. p. 93, port of the view that the king of Egypt *Art and the 169 sq.*; *The Magic 82 sqq.* was deemed to be bora again at the Sed Professor J. H. *Evolution of Kings*, i. the Sed festival is festival it has been pointed out that on religious feast of these solemn occasions, as we learn been preserved in Breasted thinks that that on these from the monuments, there was carried assumed the probably "the oldest the Sed festival is before the king on a pole an object religious feast of which any trace has been preserved in shaped like a placenta, a part of the that on these Egypt"; he admits assumed the human body which many savage or the Sed festival is occasions "the king religious feast of barbarous peoples regard as the twin been preserved in costume and insignia of that on these